

# Motion

A MEALS ON WHEELS PEOPLE NEWSLETTER



**SPRING 2025**

**INSIDE**

The Hidden Epidemic of Isolation	3
Volunteer Spotlights	5
Bite-Sized News	7
More Ways to Make an Impact	8



# Letter FROM the CEO

Scan the QR code to donate today.



## No One Should Grow Old Feeling Forgotten

Imagine going days without a single conversation. No knock on the door, no phone call, no shared meal. **For too many older adults, this is reality.** Social isolation has reached epidemic levels, and its impact on health is profound — increasing the risk of dementia, stroke, and other serious conditions.

**At Meals on Wheels People, we deliver nutritious meals and something else that is just as important: We deliver connection, dignity, and hope.** A knock on the door from a volunteer or staff member isn't just about food — it's about human connection. For nearly **20% of our home-delivery participants, that knock might be one of the few interactions they have all day.** A phone call from a Friendly Chats volunteer can be the highlight of someone's week. A shared meal at one of our dining centers can turn a lonely

day into one filled with conversation and laughter.

The need has never been greater, and neither has our resolve. **We have never had a waiting list for senior meals, and with your help, we won't start now.** But we can't do it alone. We need your help.

**We rely on our community — on you.** Volunteers, donors, and advocates are the reason older adults in our community aren't left behind. If we want to continue ensuring that every senior has access to healthy food, connection, and care, **we must act now.**

**Volunteers are at the heart of our work,** helping make sure that no senior in our community feels alone or overlooked. As we close out National Volunteer Month, I want to thank every person who has stepped up to support older adults. In the following pages,

you'll read about some of the incredible volunteers who bring our mission to life every day. But this effort doesn't end in April. **The fight against isolation is year-round, and we need you with us.**

So I urge you: **Sign up to volunteer. Make a donation. Advocate for senior services. Your loved ones and your neighbors will appreciate it.** Getting older is inevitable, but feeling forgotten isn't. Your support helps ensure that no one grows old feeling forgotten.

With gratitude,



*Suzanne Washington  
CEO, Meals on Wheels People*

# The Hidden Epidemic of Isolation

*How Meals on Wheels People is leading the fight*

For many older adults, isolation is more than just a fleeting feeling — it's a health crisis. Studies show that chronic loneliness is as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, increasing the risk of premature death by 26%. Social isolation also contributes to a higher likelihood of dementia, stroke, and chronic illness. Yet, for far too many seniors, meaningful social interaction is rare: 58% of the older adults we serve live alone, and nearly 20% of our home-delivery participants report having only one or even zero conversations on a typical day.

As the U.S. Surgeon General highlighted in the 2023 report "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation," combating social isolation must be a national priority. The core of our mission at Meals on Wheels People

(MOWP) is to nourish bodies and also nurture connections. Our programs go beyond meal delivery to provide companionship, engagement, and a sense of belonging.

**58% of older adults we serve live alone.**

"We are facing a crisis," says CEO Suzanne Washington. "We see it every day — seniors who have no one checking in, no one to talk to. This isn't just about socializing; social isolation has real and lasting consequences on health and well-being, significantly increasing the risk of heart disease, stroke, and other severe health conditions. We must take this issue seriously."

## HOW WE'RE TACKLING ISOLATION

Our community-driven programs are designed to create meaningful interactions and improve quality of life for older adults:

- **Friendly Chats:** Volunteers and staff make regular calls to our homebound participants, providing a vital source of companionship and conversation.
- **Senior Planet Tech Classes & Workshops:** Digital literacy workshops empower older adults to stay connected with family and friends through technology. Classes include Getting Started with Zoom, Getting to Know Your Smartphone, and Connecting to the Internet.
- **Pet Program:** Recognizing the deep emotional bonds between seniors and their pets, this program connects participants with pet food and veterinary care assistance so they don't have to choose between feeding and caring for themselves or their beloved companion.
- **Community-building Activities:** Bingo, book clubs, trivia clubs, and cultural celebrations create opportunities for older adults to engage, build friendships, and stay connected.

For many of our participants, the relationships they build with volunteers through these programs, meal deliveries, and neighborhood dining centers make all the difference.



"I really don't know where I would be without this program," one participant shared. "Bill has been the best! He has helped me through some hard times. His friendship and support mean so much to me. I might not be here if it wasn't for him and this program. I really don't know where I would be." A Friendly Chats recipient recently told us: "It makes me feel better knowing there's someone out there who wants to talk with me. It's uplifting."

These connections highlight the power of community and the role that social engagement plays in overall well-being.

**18.7% of our home-delivery participants have 0-1 conversations on a usual day.**

"Many of our participants tell us that the visit from a volunteer or a Friendly Chats phone call is the highlight of their day," says Operations Program Manager Robin Gao, who oversees social programming at MOWP. "The data backs up what we see — regular social interaction isn't just nice to have; it's critical. Without it, seniors face serious health risks, from depression to cognitive decline. This is a problem we can't afford to ignore."

## YOU HELP BREAK THE CYCLE OF ISOLATION

Isolation is a growing crisis, but thanks to your support, MOWP is continuing to make a life-changing difference. Your generosity sustains programs through which thousands of our aging neighbors have found companionship, connection, and a renewed sense of belonging.

If you'd like to continue helping us fight isolation, consider making a gift and signing up to volunteer today. Together, we can build a stronger, more connected community.

### Senior Planet Builds Tech Skills & Connection

"This class means that I get to be a part of a community," says Alice, a participant in the Senior Planet class at the MLK Center. Led by Social Programs Supervisor Danielle Kim, this

session on digital estate planning resources brought together 11 eager learners, each gaining skills and confidence. "Seniors are kind of left out, and when we grew up, we didn't do this kind of thing, so it's foreign to us," adds fellow participant Diane. "But now I've learned that, it's exciting. It's a good feeling when

we can accomplish something with technology. I feel proud." Whether tackling new apps or demystifying digital tools, participants find a sense of pride, empowerment, and connection.

**Lonely seniors have a 50% higher chance of developing dementia.**

**There is a 32% increased risk of stroke associated with social isolation.**



## Keeping Pets & Their People Together

For Larry, caring for his service dog, Mojo, was his top priority — but it came at a cost. Facing mounting expenses for Mojo, Larry stretched his limited resources until there wasn't enough left for himself. "I ended up in the hospital for malnutrition," he says. "I just didn't have food."

Meals on Wheels People stepped in when Larry needed it most, providing consistent meals and connecting him with resources through our Pet Program to help care for Mojo's health issues. "There's a lot more to it than just the meals," Larry says.

With both his and Mojo's health stabilized, some of the stress has lifted. "It's very stressful when you're struggling with your health and your pet's health," he says. "That's a lot of weight off my shoulders. It's meant a lot to me emotionally."

With Mojo by his side, Larry takes life one day — and one walk — at a time. Thanks to MOWP, he's not walking through it alone.



## Going the Extra Mile

### CELEBRATING FIVE EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEERS

At Meals on Wheels People, our volunteers are the driving force behind everything we do. Over the past year, **2,033 incredible individuals dedicated 89,147 hours** to supporting their aging neighbors across the Portland-Vancouver metro area — an impact valued at **\$3.2 million in cost savings**. As we close out National Volunteer Month, we're proud to recognize five outstanding volunteers who exemplify our core values of **Integrity, Respect, Inclusion, Creativity, Commitment, and Teamwork**. Their dedication, compassion, and willingness to go above and beyond make a lasting difference in the lives of the people we serve. Meet them below and see how they're making an impact!



### TOM FASZHOLZ

*Delivery driver for Hillsboro Center in Washington County*

**23 YEARS**

Tom is a cornerstone of Meals on Wheels People in Hillsboro, delivering meals with a warm smile and a listening ear. His dedication extends beyond meal deliveries — he's painted dining room walls, helped with fundraisers, served on the Hillsboro Steering Committee, and even sat on the MOWP board of directors. "It's a privilege for me to get involved and show our love for people," says Tom, 88. "So many people are just lonely. The meals are almost secondary to just being a friend and listening to people. That's the key to the whole program. It brings so much joy to me, so it works both ways."



### **PATTY FARRELL** 6 YEARS

*Delivery driver and dining center support for Martin Luther King Jr. Center in Multnomah County*

For Patty, 70, volunteering is a family tradition — her mother introduced her to Meals on Wheels People (then Loaves & Fishes) 55 years ago. Now, she is dedicated to packing meals and delivering them with her husband, Bob. “For us, it’s all about the relationships,” she says. “The staff are so competent and caring. The people we deliver meals to have really become our friends.” Patty’s attentiveness, compassion, and reliability make her an invaluable volunteer, and we’re so grateful for her commitment to our community.



### **JOHN & JOYCE GENTRY** 7 YEARS

*Delivery drivers and dining center support for Luepke Center in Clark County*

John and Joyce have been dedicated Meals on Wheels People volunteers, logging over 1,800 hours of service. From stepping in on a snow day before even completing a drive-along to collecting pet food donations, they always go the extra mile. “It’s something we can do together,” Joyce, 72, says. “It’s a warm fuzzy.” John, 73, adds: “Often, we’re the only people the participants see all day. It’s just our nature to help.” Their kindness and commitment make a lasting impact.



### **DICK WILLIS** 9 YEARS

*Delivery driver for Meals 4 Kids*

Dick’s dedication to our program is unmatched — he delivers meals three days a week with kindness and consistency. Always the first to arrive, he greets every day with a bright smile and a positive attitude. His commitment goes beyond deliveries; he’s even learning Spanish to better communicate with the families he serves. “I will be doing this for as long as I possibly can,” says Dick, 79. “I enjoy every day of it. It’s pure joy.”



### **SARAH LOCKHART** 4 YEARS

*Friendly Chats caller*

Sarah is a steady force in the Friendly Chats program, making weekly calls to a dozen participants and always stepping up to help with extra tasks. Her background in social work shines through in her deep care and advocacy for those she calls. “Everybody should feel that somebody cares about them,” says Sarah, 79. “Some people just want to know that you thought of them, that you’re there in case they need you. That’s why I do it.”

*We rely on more than 200 volunteers every day to deliver meals to homebound seniors, make Friendly Chats calls, serve lunch at our dining centers, and so much more. Will you join us? Visit [mowp.org/volunteer](https://mowp.org/volunteer) or reach our volunteer coordinator at [volunteer.coordinator@mowp.org](mailto:volunteer.coordinator@mowp.org) to sign up today!*

# Bite-Sized News

## UPDATES FROM OUR CENTERS

Exciting updates from our community! The **Tigard Center** is launching a **Korean meal**, expanding culturally inclusive dining options for seniors. During the February snowstorm, our incredible **staff and volunteers completed 1,235 Safety Calls in just three hours**, ensuring vulnerable seniors were safe and supported. At the end of February, our **Washougal Center** officially reopened, welcoming back seniors for meals and connection. Through a **partnership with Friendly House Elder Pride Services**, we've started a **new weekly lunch for the LGBTQ+ community in Washington County**, creating a welcoming space for food and fellowship. And as our community ages, we're serving more older aging neighbors — **23.3% of our participants are over the age of 80**. We're growing, serving, and building community together!



Congresswoman Maxine Dexter meeting MOWP participant Cleave

### CONGRESSWOMAN MAXINE DEXTER DELIVERS MEALS IN GRESHAM

We were honored to have **Congresswoman Maxine Dexter** join us at our Ambleside Center to help deliver meals to some of the incredible older adults in our community. By stepping into the role of a Meals on Wheels People volunteer, she saw firsthand the **impact of healthy meals and meaningful connections** for homebound seniors. We appreciate her commitment to addressing food insecurity and strengthening our community!

### SUPPORT SENIORS IN CLARK COUNTY DURING GIVEBIG!



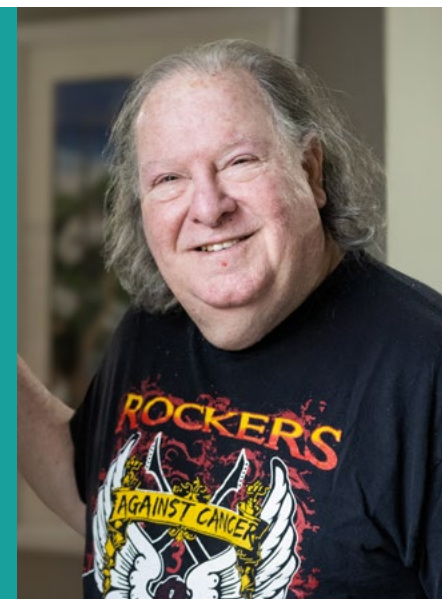
Last year, we delivered **172,030 meals to 1,777 older adults in Clark**

**County**, providing nourishment, connection, and support. Innovative programs like **The Diner Vancouver**, the **Pet Program**, and the **Diners Club** all started here. Washington's **GiveBIG (May 6-7)** is your chance to make an impact — donate and help spread the word! Share our mission with friends, family, and colleagues to ensure more older adults in Clark County get the food and companionship they need. Scan the QR code to join us in making a difference!

### ADVOCACY MATTERS: SPEAK UP FOR SENIORS

With the **demand for meals and services rising**, continued Older Americans Act funding is critical to ensuring no older adult goes hungry or feels isolated. Meals on Wheels is a **proven, effective solution** — **but we need your help** to protect and expand these critical services. Have you or someone you know been impacted by Meals on Wheels People? Sharing your story helps us advocate for essential programs that keep seniors nourished and connected. **Your voice matters**. Contact your senators and representatives today and make your voice heard! Learn more at [mowp.org/what-we-do/advocate](https://www.mowp.org/what-we-do/advocate).

Ed, a former foley artist who worked on films like *Jerry Maguire* and *Apollo 13*, relies on Meals on Wheels People to help him stay nourished. "I've got health issues, and to make a meal is just really hard these days," he says. "The financial aspect is a big part of it, too. Meals on Wheels People makes it easier to eat well — the food is great, and I know I'm eating much healthier than I would be otherwise."





# More Ways to Make an Impact

Your generosity makes a real difference! Did you know there are additional ways to support Meals on Wheels People beyond traditional donations?

- **Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs):** Recommend a grant from your DAF to provide meals and connection for older adults.
- **IRA Qualified Charitable Distributions:** IRA owners age 70 1/2 and over, make a tax-free gift directly from your IRA.
- **Gifts of Stock:** Donating appreciated stock may offer tax benefits while fueling our mission.



Explore more ways to give at [mowp.org/ways-to-give](https://mowp.org/ways-to-give) or call 503-953-8183 for assistance.

## Quarterly IMPACT STATS

JAN. 1 - MARCH 31, 2025



7,497  
individuals served



360,836  
meals served



6,454  
Friendly Chats & safety calls

Follow us to stay up to date with events, volunteer opportunities, & more.

- mealsonwheelspeople
- mealsonwheelspeople
- mealswheelsppl
- mealsonwheelspeople



Donate a meal:  
[mowp.org](https://mowp.org)